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A "NEW SCHOOL" IN AMERICA

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Prospectuses littered my library table, and John and I, looking them over, were hopelessly bewildered by the multitude of good things which they offered—none of them, however, the kind of good things for which we were looking. John is my thirteen-year-old son. Owing to a severe illness in his childhood he has been unable to endure the eye-strain and the close confinement of the usual public school. So now we were trying to find a boarding-school for him where he might have an active out-door life, as few hours of book-work a day as possible, and yet that social discipline which no child can get at home. He needed contact with many other boys to socialize him, and make him a useful member of society.

But these prospectuses before us offered nothing of the kind. There were pictures of beautiful buildings, there were descriptions of military drills and uniforms, and promises in regard to college preparation. We read a good deal about athletics, but a glance at the programme and a rapid computation of the hours that must be devoted to study made it quite plain that few boys would be able at once to attain excellence in mental work, and get in any kind of out-door living.

While we were yet facing our discouragement there came the postman's ring, together with the prospectus of the Interlaken School, at La Porte, Indiana. At once, as I read the description of the German Rural Educational Homes, upon which this school is based, I remembered a talk which Colonel Parker once gave to his faculty on Dr. Lietz's schools in Germany. He told us how the boys there rose early in the morning, took a cold shower, and an out-door run, ate a simple but abundant breakfast, and were ready for school work at half-past seven, with eyes and brains fresh from the night's rest. He told us how full of vigor the

boys were, how robust their health, and how clear their minds. Here in this prospectus I read that the founder of Interlaken, Dr. Edward Rumely, had taught in Dr. Lietz's school for some time before returning to his home in America, and that Interlaken was indeed another school of the same sort, transplanted to American soil.

Later I found that the first school of the group now known as "The New Schools" was founded by Dr. Cecil Reddie, at Abbotsholme, England. Dr. Reddie's recent visit here as a member of the Mosely Commission, sent by the English Parliament to investigate our educational system, has made him known probably to many readers of this article.

Dr. Lietz was one of the first to work with Dr. Reddie at Abbotsholme, and he wrote a very Germanic, idealistic, but most valuable and suggestive, book about it, called *Emlohstobba*—which name, you perceive, is just Abbotsholme spelled backward. Dr. Lietz now has three schools, one at Elsenburg in the Hartz Mountains, one in Thuringia, and one near Frankfort. There is another school of the same sort on the shores of Lake Constance, and still others are located in Sweden, Poland, and France. The boys who attend these schools for the most part wear red caps, and as part of their course includes a *Wanderjahr*, during which they travel over Europe on foot and on bicycle, they have come to be widely known as the Red Cap Boys. It is well to add, perhaps, that they are favorably known; for when a group of them stop over night at the farm of a peasant they don't make him suffer for their visit, but, on the contrary, give him a good lift with his morning's work before they depart.

Well, John and I, and John's father, were so well pleased with the prospectus that we all started at once to visit La Porte. We found the school located in a substantial, old-fashioned, roomy mansion, set well back from the road, and surrounded by seventeen acres of varied land, including an orchard, a large garden, fields, woods, and the shores of an inland lake. Here, surely, was opportunity for that varied country life which we had been led to expect. The boys could fish, row, or swim in warm weather, while in the winter the ice would give them a field for

skating, tobogganing, and ice-boating. In the house were laboratories, and a large manual-training workshop, besides classrooms, and a library with an open fire where the boys gathered at the end of the day for what the directors called a "family evening." This was in agreeable contrast to those evening study hours which had dismayed me as part of the routine of other boys' schools.

Without describing further my own personal experience—for that would stretch the description beyond the limits of this article—I will say briefly that John entered the school, and that when he came home for the Christmas holidays, looking as hearty as possible, he said that he liked the school just as well for school as he did home for home. So at the end of the vacation he went back again, quite happy and contented. Is not that exactly the way a boy ought to feel about his school?

In the diminutive community of a school located, like this, on a farm, many of those processes which have disappeared altogether from city life are still in daily use, and the pupils learn of them by seeing them performed, as well as by actual participation in the work. Here are Dr. Dewey's and Colonel Parker's ideas practically carried out.

The boys make frequent excursions on foot or by wheel to neighboring factories and mills. Near La Porte there are various industries operating with wood, metal, and fibers as raw materials. The visits of the boys are encouraged by the factory owners. In fact, many business men and manufacturers are taking a deep interest in the school, and have told the directors of their willingness to co-operate in every way and to receive the pupils in their plants. The boys study at first hand noteworthy industrial feats like the damming of a river, the sinking of deep tubular wells, or the building of a city like Gary.

As may well be imagined, a visit to a foundry to see all the stages of the smelting process greatly rouses their interest. The lining of the ladles with clay, the charging of the cupola with iron and coke, the opening of the blast, the making of molds and cores, the pouring of the molten fluid, the dumping of rattling finished castings—how intently the boys observe these

things! The experiences of such excursions are employed as illustrative material in classes of physics, chemistry, history, and geography. This discussion of the underlying laws knits the fragmentary information together into an organic whole in the mind of the pupil.



OUT-DOOR WORK IN MANUAL TRAINING, INTERLAKEN SCHOOL

In the field and garden the school repeats wherever practicable the experiments reported in the publications of the United States Department of Agriculture. In this work the school attempts to rouse the boy's interest early in the coming age, greater perhaps in importance than that of steel and steam, in

which man shall mold like wax the plant forms to suit his needs.

In conclusion let me quote directly from the prospectus :

The basis of the educational home is healthy environment that surrounds, like the walls of a house with large windows, the space in which youthful freedom can move and develop. The boy should feel that he is free and unhampered, that the spirit of the house concedes to him the right of self-government, that it can and does have confidence in him. With a limited number such education can be carried on successfully, while with a larger number freedom must make way to rules and prohibitions, and spontaneous buoyancy must yield before overemphasized discipline.

Religion and morals are, of course, inseparable, whether we are in a chapel offering prayers and thanksgiving; or in class; or in the fields studying the marvelous works of God; in history or natural science; or wandering by the river, in the wood or on the hill; or are standing under the starry heavens and gazing into the dark abyss—always and in all places we are offering up divine service. Religion is too sacred and too subtle a matter, too much an affair of the feelings and affections, of the inward life and will, to be adequately handled in class or taught like an ordinary subject, say mathematics.

We do not try to lecture on religion to our pupils, but live religion before them and with them. Our pupils must never see or hear us scoff about sacred things, nor find us indifferent or indulgent about what is wrong. They must observe in us reverence for what is holy, indignation at wrong doing, pitying gentleness for weakness, and boundless readiness at all times to help every one. They ought to see their teachers attempting to do that which the Great Master did to His disciples and to all men—forgiving, helping, reproving, healing, consoling, encouraging; in a word—loving.

With the limited number of pupils—the school admits only fifty boys at a time—it is entirely possible for the directors to carry out their promise of sharing very fully the daily life of the pupils. They lead them on the morning run, eat at the same tables, help and direct them as older friends in the classroom, dig with them in the garden, and take part in their manual work. They swim or row with them in the afternoon, accompany them on excursions, and read or listen with them at the evening family gathering.

In spite of all this varied activity and its comparatively light insistence upon book-work—or rather, perhaps, exactly because of this state of affairs, a state which keeps the boys' minds fresh

and responsive, and their bodies full of vigor—the school prepares its pupils for entrance to any college. But it does not make this the end and aim of its being. On the contrary, the boy who has five years at Interlaken is already pretty well prepared for life.

The school has a branch in the Black Forest, at which the plan contemplates a stay during the last year of the course. I say a stay, but the school is scarcely more than headquarters for the boys, who spend most of that year traveling about Europe in charge of their tutors. These travels are very simply pursued on foot or on bicycle, the trains being only occasionally brought into requisition over particularly difficult bits of country. The boys camp out by the roadsides, or put up at country inns, or with the peasantry. The cost of the trips averages only \$1.50 a day.

At Interlaken the boys learn to speak German and French, and in some cases Spanish. These languages are perfected, of course, during the stay in Europe; and in the meantime, the fact that they are going to be actually in use within a short time makes the boys eager for their acquisition. Nor is this by any means the only advantage of the year of foreign travel. The knowledge acquired at Interlaken is from the beginning linked with actual observations of its living forms, and the European travel knits together those loose ends of the study of history, or the languages, and sciences, of which the living forms are in other countries. In short, to quote Dr. Lietz:

The boy who at eighteen has tasted some of the best thoughts of Hebrew, Hellenic, and Christian antiquity, and has drunk of the choicest vintage of Italian, French, and Spanish, Norse, and Anglo-Saxon literature; who beside telescope and microscope, can use pencil and violin; who is at home not only in library, museum, or laboratory, but also in workshop or garden, farmyard or forest; the boy who can run and jump, dance and sing; who is at ease in river or boat; who can cast a line and bring down a bird on the wing; the boy to whom geography and history and the institutions of his fatherland are not unexplored continents; the boy who knows how to live healthily, and how to defy, not only wind and weather, but the demoralizing influences of modern life—this boy does not belong in the least to the regions of fable; he is the realizable ideal of our school.